

HUNTING FOR A MUSEUM.

A WESTERN ZOOLOGIST AS AN EXPERT HUNTER.

CAMP FIRES OF A NATURALIST. The story of four expeditions north—North American mammals, from the field notes of Lewis Linday Dyche, A. M. M. S., professor of zoology and curator of birds and mammals in the Kansas State University, by Charles E. Dyche, Illustrated, Pip. ix, 300 pp. Appleton & Co.

It is not always that a professor of zoology is so enthusiastic a sportsman as Professor Dyche. He is ready and as skillful with the gun as with the tools of the anatomist or the taxidermist. His hunting exploits told in this book by another hand, but apparently with little effort to expand his own notes, are as varied as those of Gordon Cumming, for example, in South Africa. His grizzly bear is as dangerous as the lion, and his mountain sheep and goats more difficult to stalk and shoot than any creatures of the torrid zone. Evidently he came by his tastes as a hunter from lifelong experience. It is said of him here that he was born in an emigrant wagon, and was nursed by an Indian squaw in Kansas until his mother recovered her health sufficiently to take him in charge. His parents were seeking a new home in the wilderness. Thus his life practically began at the campfire, and apparently his greatest pleasures in life have been near the campfire from that raw March day when he first felt its glow down to the present time. "At the age of nine he was hunting and trapping along the banks of the Waukau-russa River. His playthings were his dogs; his playgrounds were the woods and prairies and the camps of the Indians." His pioneer father was also an adept with the gun apparently, for the son attributed much of his success to parental maxims which the poorest marksmen should be the quickest to appreciate. "Always see that the sight is on the aim," was the admonition, "then you pull the trigger." At sixteen he was an expert in the lore of the woods and plain and river, but almost as innocent of books as a baby. Then he began to think of an education, and his first adventure in this new field was at the State Normal School of Kansas. After three years there he turned to the State University. His unconventional manner of life, so different from that known to college-bred men, is shown in the fact that during his first summer at the university he earned himself. Only the cold weather seemed to drive him into a house. As he went on with his studies he found that all the practical knowledge of animals which he had gained in youth was of use to him in the sciences to which he was especially attracted. He knew how to skin an animal and what to do with the pelt long before he had ever heard of taxidermy, and was familiar with the bones of a skeleton long before he knew their scientific names. On the other hand, his schooling reacted on his habits as a hunter. He concluded that he could train himself for shooting game of which he had only book knowledge by experiments on the university campus. The fact that so little was really known by naturalists as to the peculiarities of the Rocky Mountain sheep and the Rocky Mountain goat, and that all wild animals were rapidly disappearing, led him to plan a journey to British Columbia. But, while he had acquainted himself with the habits of deer and bear in regions more accessible by the ordinary methods of the hunter, he felt that in this case he must know what he could do before he started on his expedition. His preparation included daily target practice with two new rifles—a Winchester, 45-70, model of 1886, and a 45-75 Remington. Day after day the practice was continued, until forty pounds of lead had been shot at every conceivable form of target, under every possible circumstance which his experience had taught him might expect in the woods of the Cascade Range. Rolling and stationary targets were fired at from a standstill or while running; he would run at full speed forty or fifty yards and then fire, until he became familiar with his guns under all circumstances, and until he felt that he had full control over his nerves and muscles, as well as a perfect knowledge of just what his guns would do." It must be remembered that this was simply additional training on a scientific plan for a man who was already a dead shot on ground with which he was familiar. The result was that when he reached the mountains he wasted scarcely a single cartridge. The only things his experimental method did not prepare him for were the icy rivers which he had to ford, the snow-fields and the thin air of the heights. But he seems to have had nothing to learn as a crows nest, and he ventured upon precipices almost as coolly as the goats themselves.

In all his hunting he killed only to kill the animals necessary for his purpose. He never but once fired into a herd of deer standing close together, and his conscience smote him on that occasion. When he had secured specimens of all ages and sexes in a given species, so that he could mount what might be called a family group, then he turned his sporting instincts upon new game. He found the Rocky Mountain goat a very different animal from that usually pictured and described. He marked its general appearance as that of a diminutive American buffalo of a dirty white color. Its pictures generally the goat is represented with its head above the line of its body. This, the professor points out, is anatomically impossible. The hump between the animal's foreshoulders is a matter of bone structure and not of fatty tissue. He found also in all the specimens which he secured that the hump was practically destroyed by the mass of ticks which had emboldened themselves in the ear. Altogether the goat seems to have the look of the sheep. Its real protection lies in the fact that the flesh is so impregnated with musk as to be revolting to both smell and taste. When Dyche fell among the Indians and tried to get their experience about game, one of the savages, pointing up to the mountains where the goat passed his time, remarked, "Me no hunt him," and his companions laughed. No wonder the Indian does not hunt what he cannot eat. The animal most difficult of capture the professor found to be the moose. He became expert with the birch-bark trumpet, used in luring this wary beast within gunshot, but he had many a night of misery in frozen swamps before he got the specimens he sought.

From the point of view of general natural history, this book would have been more interesting if the professor were a man of wider observation. His notes, unless we may be allowed to say, indicate that his eyes are trained only to hunting and taxidermy. In spite of his youthful friendship with the Indians in Kansas, he was unable to draw out the northern red men when their superstitions excited his curiosity. Where another naturalist would have reproduced with graphic skill the whole environment of the animal, it is difficult to obtain, this book supplies only fragmentary details. Some of the zoological information is so elementary that it is a positive irritation to strike a page of it. If every line of it had been omitted, and equal space had been given to the geographical setting for the various hunting exploits of Professor Dyche, the book would have been the better for it. But the showing made for the work of the professor in his own field is surprising. The book is illustrated with numerous photographic views.

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